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ABSTRACT

The 6th century of the Byzantine Empire, dominated by the emperor Justinian (527-565 C.E.), is the focus of this unit of lessons designed for grades 7-12. Justinian's contributions to world history in various fields are examined. Noting that not all scholars are in agreement as to when Byzantine history began, the unit places its origins either at the time of Constantine the Great (324-337 C.E.), or at the reign of Justinian. The unit begins with an overview and rationale and then provides the following teacher background materials: a unit context, a correlation to the National History Standards, unit objectives, and six lesson plans. Topics for the lesson plans include geography of the empire, Nika Revolt, Vandal wars in Africa, Justinian as a law reformer, Byzantine architecture, and Justinian and Theodora. Each lesson contains student activity questions. Primary source materials are provided, along with a 23-item bibliography. (BT)

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THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE IN THE AGE OF JUSTINIAN

BY DR. LINDA KAREN MILLER

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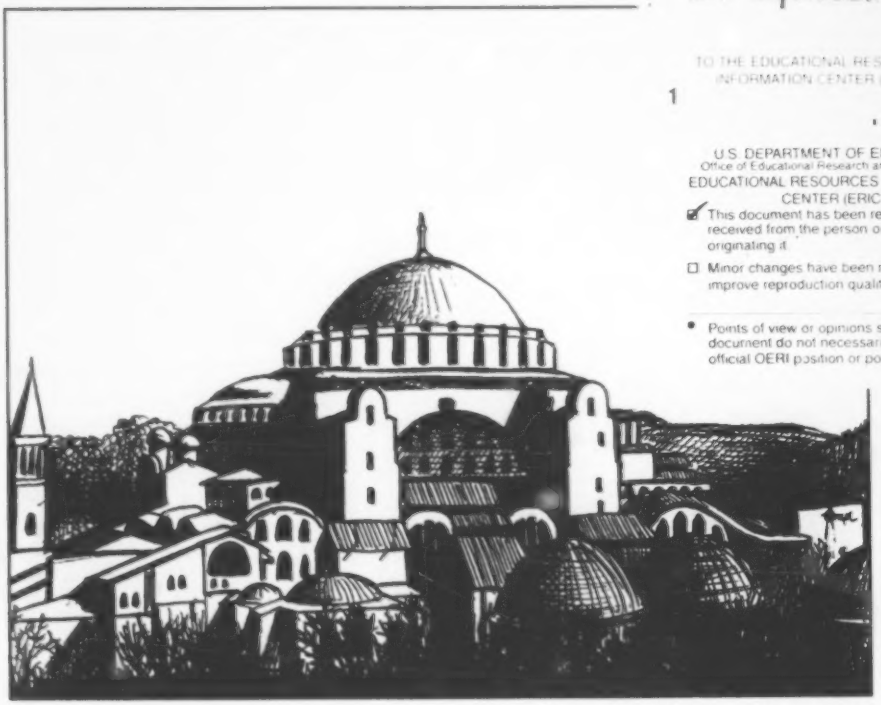

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS
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I. UNIT OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

This unit consists of lessons focused on selected topics during the sixth century of the Byzantine Empire. The emperor Justinian (527-565 C.E.) dominated this century. His reign marked the climax of the Christian Roman Empire. His religious policy established the emperor as a theological dictator. In foreign affairs, one of his tasks was to recover, with the help of his generals Belisarius and Narses, former Roman territories now held by Barbarians. Conquering Africa from the Vandals and Italy from the Ostrogoths once more made the Mediterranean a Roman lake and revived Roman rule in the West. As a Christian emperor he made it his mission to propagate the faith among the infidels. In domestic affairs, he collated and revised the existing system of Roman Law and issued his Code in 533. He also beautified his capital by constructing many buildings, notably St. Sophia, church of the Holy Wisdom, in the new Byzantine style of architecture. With this church at the center Justinian transformed the Near Eastern world in accord with the principles of Christianity. In all his work he had the help of his remarkable wife Theodora, whose firmness during the Nika Revolt helped him from losing the throne.

During Justinian's reign, characteristics of Byzantine culture were being shaped. This age represented an important transition from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages. Justinian accomplished great deeds in many fields: he carried out major legal reforms, erected buildings, fought and won wars against powers in Africa and Italy, and changed the role of Christianity in the empire. During his reign, Constantinople served as a place in which government, literature, art, and architecture found full expression. The restoration of Roman law was a monumental achievement. We owe an immense debt to Justinian and the ideals for which he stood.

The lessons contained here examine Justinian's contributions to world history in various fields. Through a dramatic reading of an account of the Nika Revolt, students realize that Justinian might have lost his empire if it had not been for his strong wife Theodora, who was his partner until 548, when she died of cancer. The expensive Vandal Wars in Africa were one of the concerns of the people that triggered the Nika Riots. Students will examine an account of the wars by the historian Procopius. After his success in Africa, Justinian turned to reforming the law. This was his most notable achievement. It supplied an underlying unity to the state. Justinian was a Christian ruler and the triumph of the faith was a sacred mission for him. His writings reveal his

success in Africa, Justinian turned to reforming the law. This was his most notable achievement. It supplied an underlying unity to the state. Justinian was a Christian ruler and the triumph of the faith was a sacred mission for him. His writings reveal his religious beliefs. No Roman emperor since Theodosius the Great had made such as effort to convert the empire and root out paganism. The ruler as builder was an established practice in ancient times. The new style of Greek Christian architecture, a square plan laid out under a central dome was glorified in the rebuilding of the St. Sophia, which had been burned to the ground during the Nika revolt. Finally, the other side of the emperor and empress is revealed in an unfavorable account by the historian Procopius in *The Secret History*.

II. UNIT CONTEXT

This unit may be taught as part of either the Middle Ages or the later Roman Empire. Not all scholars are in agreement as to when Byzantine history began. Some place its origins at the time of Constantine the Great, 324-337 C.E., while others suggest the reign of Justinian. This unit looks at the sixth century of an empire that would finally fall to the Turks in 1453 C.E.

III. CORRELATION TO THE NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

"The Byzantine Empire in the Age of Justinian" provides teaching materials that address the *National Standards for History*, Basic Edition (National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA, 1996), World History, Era 4, "Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300-1000 CE." Lessons specifically address Standard 1A on the decline of the Roman Empire and the consolidation of the Byzantine state, and Standard 1B on the expansion of Christianity.

This unit also highlights a number of the "Standards in Historical Thinking" including:

> Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration (Standard 1: Chronological Thinking)
>
> Appreciate historical perspectives (Standard 2: Historical Comprehension)
>
> Analyze cause-and-effect relationships bearing in mind the importance of the individual in history (Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation)
>
> Formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eye-witness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past (Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities)

IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the extent of the Roman empire in the 6th century.
2. To identify the need for a written code of law.
3. To identify the Byzantine style of architecture.
4. To examine the roles of the Emperor Justinian as a reformer.
5. To study primary source documents in order to think like historians.
6. To examine point of view in documents.

V. LESSON PLANS

1. Geography of the empire
2. Nika Revolt
3. Vandal Wars in Africa
4. Justinian as a Law Reformer
5. Byzantine Architecture
6. Justinian and Theodora

TABLE OF DATES

THE WEST		CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE EASTERN EMPIRE		EASTERN FRONT	
		482	Birth of Justinian		
		493	Justinian brought to Constantinople to be educated		
518	End of schism between People & Eastern church	518	Death of Anastasius Justin I becomes Emperor Promotion of Justinian Persecution of Monophysites begins		
		520	Consulship of Vitalian Vitalian assassinated by Justin and Justinian		
		521	Consulship of Justinian		
523	Hilderic become king of Vandals & begins pro-imperial, anti-Ostrogothic policy				
		525	Justinian appointed Caesar by Justin I Marriage of Justinian and Theodora		
				526	War with Persia Belisarius in command
		527	Justinian made co-emperor Death of Justin I Succession of Justinian	527	Belisarius continues operations against Persia
		528	Codification of law began		
		529	April: First version of Code issued. Closure of Academy in Athens. Revolts of Samaritans.		

	THE WEST		CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE EASTERN EMPIRE		EASTERN FRONT
530	King Hilderic of the Vandals deposed by Gelimer Praetorian Prefect	530	John of Cappadocia appointed who revives anti-imperial policy	530	Belisarius defeats Persians at Dara
				531	Belisarius defeated by Persians at Callinicum
		532	January: Nika riots. Massacre of rioters by Belisarius and Mundus		
533	June: Belisarius sails to Sicily, lands in North Africa. September: Belisarius defeats Gelimer at Tenth Milestone and occupies Carthage. December: Vandal army destroyed at Tricamarum.	533	December: Publication of *Digest*		
534	Surrender of Gelimer to Belisarius. Solomon left in command in Africa.	534	Belisarius celebrates triumph for conquest of Africa. Publication of second version of *Code*.		
535	Belsarius captures Syracuse and begins occupation of Sicily				
536	Mutiny in Africa. Belisarius invades Italy, takes Naples. December: Belisarius occupies Rome.				
		537	December: Dedication of Hagia Sophia		
539	Ostrogoths recover Milan and massacre its population				
540	Belisarius accepts surrender of Ostrogoths and enters Ravenna	540	Slav raiders threaten Constantinople and ravage Greece		

THE WEST		CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE EASTERN EMPIRE		EASTERN FRONT	
		541	John of Cappadocia dismissed as a result of intrigue by Theodora	541	Belisarius takes over command in east
		542	Peter Barsymes organizes state monopoly of silk trade. Summer outbreak of bubonic plague in Egypt, which rapidly spreads throughout the empire.		
		543	Plague continues to rage. Peter Barsymes to be appointed Practorian Prefect.		
544	Belisarius returns to take command in Italy.				
				545	Truce with Persia
546	New mutiny in Africa	546	Justinian issues edict condemning Three Chapters		
547	Totila abandons Rome and Belisarius reenters the city. Completion of church of S. Vitale in Ravenna.	547	Pope Vigilius arrives in Constantinople		
548	Belisarius recalled from Italy.			548	June: Death of Theodora
549	Completion of Church of S. Apollimare in Classe, near Ravenna				
		551	Open breach between Justinian and Pope Vigilius.		
		553	May: Fifth ecumenical council condemns Three Chapters in spite of opposition by Pope Vigilius. December: Vigilius under pressure condemns Three Chapters.		

THE WEST		CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE EASTERN EMPIRE		EASTERN FRONT	
		554	Silkworm eggs smuggled into empire from Soghdiana and Byzantine silk production begun		
555	Pope Vigilius dies in Sicily on way back to Rome				
				557	New truce with Persia
		558	Dome of Hagia Sophia collapses. Recurrence of bubonic plague.		
		559	Belisarius recalled from retirement, defeats Kotrigurs.		
		561	Conspiracy to assassinate Justinian. 24 December rededication of Hagia Sophia.		
				562	Fifty Years Peace with Persia
		563	Justinian undertakes pilgrimage to Germia in Galatia		
		565	January: Justinian promulgates doctrine of Aphthartodocetism in new attempt to reach compromise with Monophysites. March: Death of Belisarius. November 14: Death of Justinian and accession of Justin II.		

Adapted from Robert Browning, *Justinian and Theodora* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

DRAMATIC MOMENT

In January 532 an event occurred in Constantinople that nearly brought Justinian down from his throne. Two opposing political factions, the Blues and Greens, went to the Hippodrome to make common cause against the government. Their traditional rivalry forgotten, both factions surged from the Hippodrome chanting Nika! (Win!). They forced their way into the palace of the City Prefect, killed the police and set free all the prisoners. They set fire to public buildings, including churches. They demanded the dismissal of the City Prefect and other officials.

Justinian appeared the next morning in the imperial box carrying the gospel and declared that he was to blame for what happened. Meanwhile behind closed doors Justinian and his associates were in earnest debate. A fast galley was waiting at the private harbor of the palace and the emperor was resolved to flee to Herakiaia in Thrace.

After Belisarius' mission to capture one of the crowd's leaders failed, Justinian ordered an immediate flight to the harbor. Then Theodora, who had sat silent as men argued this way and that, rose to her feet:

> *Whether or not a woman should give an example of courage to men, is neither here nor there. At a moment of desperate danger one must do what one can. I think that flight, even if it brings us to safety, is not in our interest. Every man born to see the light of day must die. But that one who has been emperor should become an exile I cannot bear. May I never be without the purple I wear, nor live to see the day when men do not call me "Your Majesty". If you wish safety, my Lord, that is an easy matter. We are rich, and there is the sea, and yonder our ships. But consider whether if you reach safety you may not desire to exchange that safety for death. As for me, I like the old saying, that the purple is the noblest shroud.* (Procopius, *History of the Wars*, vol. 1, Sec. 24, 33-37. Quoted in Robert Browning, *Justinian and Theodora*.)

She sat down. The men looked at one another nervously. Belisarius began discussing military plans. He and his other generals and their mercenaries went to the Hippodrome. They cut down every civilian within reach. The benches dripped with blood and the Hippodrome resounded with the echoes of the screams of the wounded and dying. When it was over thirty thousand men had been killed. But Justinian's position was confirmed. Now he knew whom he could trust—Belisarius, Mundus, Narses, and above all Theodora.

LESSON ONE

GEOGRAPHY OF THE EMPIRE

A. OBJECTIVES

1. Have students analyze maps and determine extent of Roman empire.

2. Have students analyze how geography influences history.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

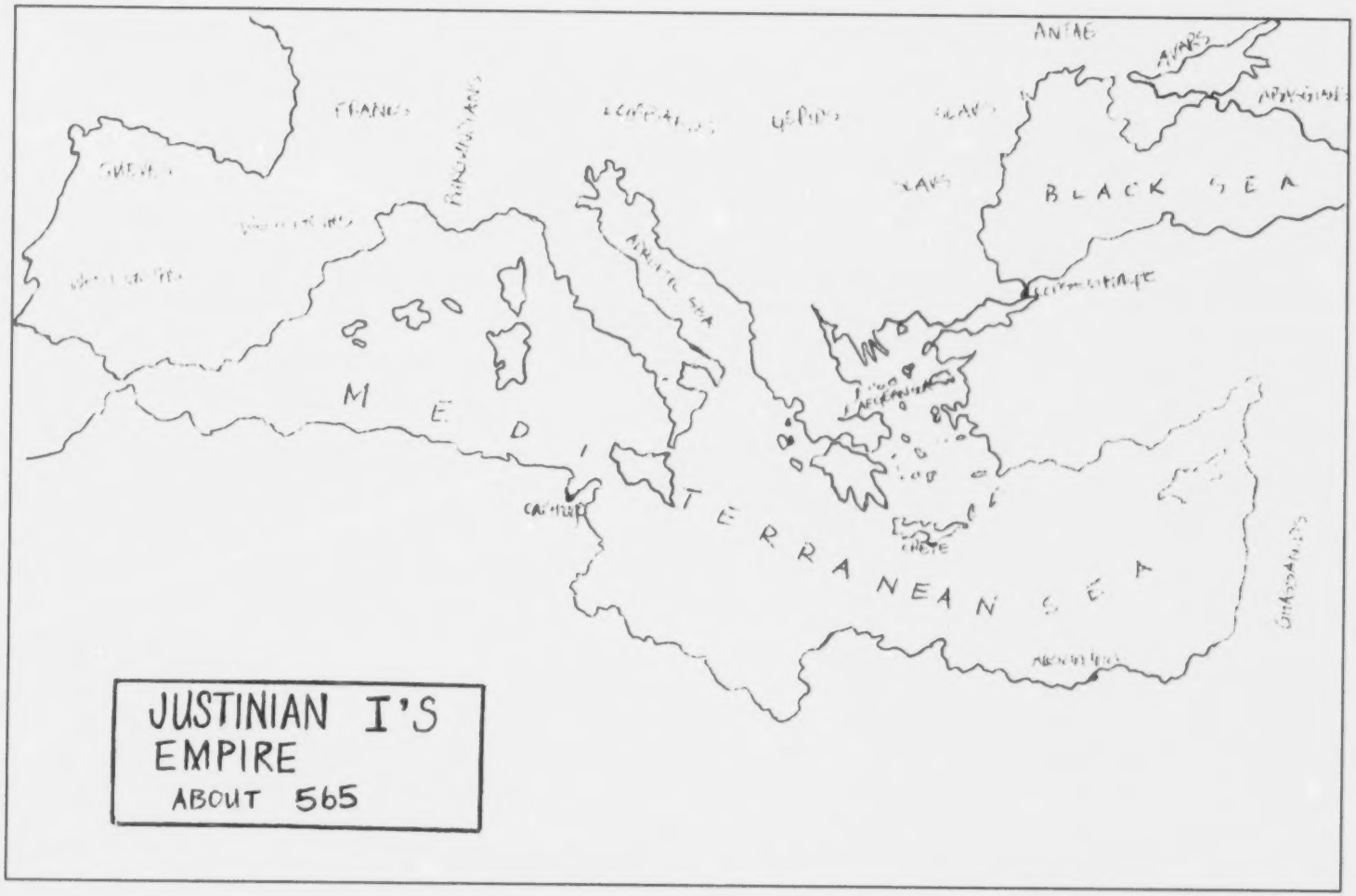
1. Have students analyze maps of the empire during the reign of Justinian. How did the empire grow during his reign?

2. Have students read Procopius' account of the empire.

3. Have students write paragraphs on how geography influenced history in the empire.

C. EVALUATION

1. Have students share their paragraphs.


BLACK SEA
M E D I T E R R A N E A N S E A
JUSTINIAN I'S
EMPIRE
ABOUT 565

Geography

Close study of particular towns suggest that their sites appear to have been rationally selected. In the formation of towns two elements have been detected. First, there is the human group which may establish a castle, abbey, market, or port; and second, there is the physical element, the site which, if well chosen from the standpoints of local and regional advantages, may foster the survival and growth of the town.

The advantages of particular sites were sometimes unnoticed rather than recognized by those who first occupied them. The Greeks from Megara, who made the first settlement at Byzantium c. 637 B.C.E, did not at first appreciate the great potentialities of this incomparable site because they were primarily farmers. It was only later, when they found agriculture difficult, that they turned their attention to the rich fish resources of the Golden Horn and to the profits of the Black Sea - Aegean trade.

Thus the Byzantine peninsula has been regarded from an early date as an ideal situation for a capital city. Placed at a junction of the two great seas that wash the shores of three continents, and possessed of a safe and extensive anchorage for shipping, Byzantium was situated to become the center of empire and commerce for the whole Eastern hemisphere.

During the classic period of Greek history, the town rose to considerable importance because its commanding position enabled it to impose tolls on ships sailing to and from the Euxine (Black) Sea. It was also enriched by the countless schools of fish that descended from the Euxine and thronged the narrow gulf called the Golden Horn. Ultimately, Byzantium became the largest city in Thrace, the region of Southeastern Europe facing the Bosphorus and Dardanelles.

Of all the ancient historians, only one has left us a description that gives some visual impression of the appearance of Old Byzantium. According to Dion Cassius,

> This city is most favorably situated being built upon an eminence which juts out into the sea. The waters, like a torrent, rushing downwards from the Pontus impinge against the promontory and flow partly to the right, so as to form the bay and harbors, but the main stream runs swiftly alongside the city into the Propontius. The town is also extremely well fortified, for the wall is faced with great square stones jointed together by brazen clamps, and it is further strengthened on the inside through mounds and houses being built up against it. This wall seems to consist of a solid mass of stone, and it has covered a gallery above, which is very easily defended. On the outside there are many large towers, perforated with frequent loopholes and ranged in an irregular line, so that an attacking party is surrounded by them and exposed on all sides at once. Toward the land the fortification are

> very lofty, but less so on the side of the water, as the rocks on which they are founded and the dangers of the Bosphorus render them almost unassailable. There are two harbors within the walls, guarded by chains and at the ends of the moles inclosing them towers facing each other make the passage impractible to the enemy. I have seen the walls standing and have also heard them speaking; for there are seven vocal towers stretching from the Thracian gates to the sea. If one shouts or drops a pebble in the first it not only resounds itself or repeats the syllables, but it transmits the power for the next in order to do the same; and thus the voice or echo is carried in regular succession through the whole series. [William Gordon Homes, *The Age of Justinian and Theodora* (London: Bell and Sons, 1912), 6-7.]

The peninsula on which Constantinople is built is essentially a low mountainous ridge, irregular slopes from the sea arising on three sides. It terminates abruptly in a rounded headland opposite the Asiatic shores, from which it is separated by the entrance to the Bosphorus, at this point a little more than a mile in width. This peninsula, which is bounded on the north by the Golden Horn, or inland extension of the Bosphorus, and on the south by the Propontis or Sea of Marmara, has a length of between three and four miles. The unlevel nature of the ground, which is reminiscent of the seven hills of classical Rome, has always caused a parallel to be drawn between the sites of the two capitals of the empire. The Golden Horn describes a curve to the northwest more than six miles long. The climate of this locality is very changeable. The region is exposed to north winds chilled by transit over the Russian steppes and to warm breezes that originate in the tropical expanses of Africa and Arabia. The temperature may range through twenty degrees in a day, and winters are of arctic severity. Earthquakes are a permanent source of annoyance and have sometimes been very destructive.

When Constantine determined to supplant the ancient capital on the Tiber by building a new city in a place of his own choice, he does not appear to have been more acute in discerning the advantages of Byzantium than were the first colonists from Megara.

Justinian's government promoted industry and commerce. Constantinople was the halfway house controlling trade routes connecting Europe, northern Africa, and Asia. Its trade with lands to the east enriched the empire. Justinian tried to establish contact with China by a roundabout route. It was through the silk trade that the Byzantines first came into contact with the Turks. Finally, agents from the empire succeeded in finding out the secret of manufacturing silk. Byzantine silk production grew rapidly and became one of the most flourishing industries in the empire.

LESSON TWO

THE NIKA REVOLT

A. OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the importance of the Nika Revolt.

2. To examine the character of the Emperor in time of crisis.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Read the Dramatic Moment to the class. Tell them they will be studying important events during the reign of Justinian, sixth century ruler of the Byzantine Empire.

2. Have students construct a time line beginning and ending with the life of Justinian. Tell them that they will be adding events to the timeline as they read through the unit.

3. Using a map or historical atlas, have students locate the Byzantine Empire.

4. Have students locate public buildings on the map of Constantinople and appreciate the position of the Hippodrome in light of the revolt.

5. Discuss with students the differences between the Greens and the Blues. A good reference is A. A. Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, vol. 1. Basically the differences are:

   Greens: persecuted party, monophysites and suffered for religious beliefs, lower class and jobless, opponents of a united empire.

   Blues: were Justinian's favored party, orthodox, upper class, supported Emperor's policies.

6. Have students read the Nika revolt dialogue as a reader's theater.

7. Afterwards have students break into groups representing the Blues, Greens, and Justinian's advisers. Have each group present its concerns to the Emperor.

8. Discussion questions:

   a. What were the causes of the revolt?
   b. What could Justinian have done differently?
   c. What role did Theodora play?
   d. What does this incident reveal about the character of the emperor?
   e. What were the effects of the revolt?

C. EVALUATING THE LESSON

1. Evaluate the students' position papers.

2. Keep checking students' timelines throughout the unit.

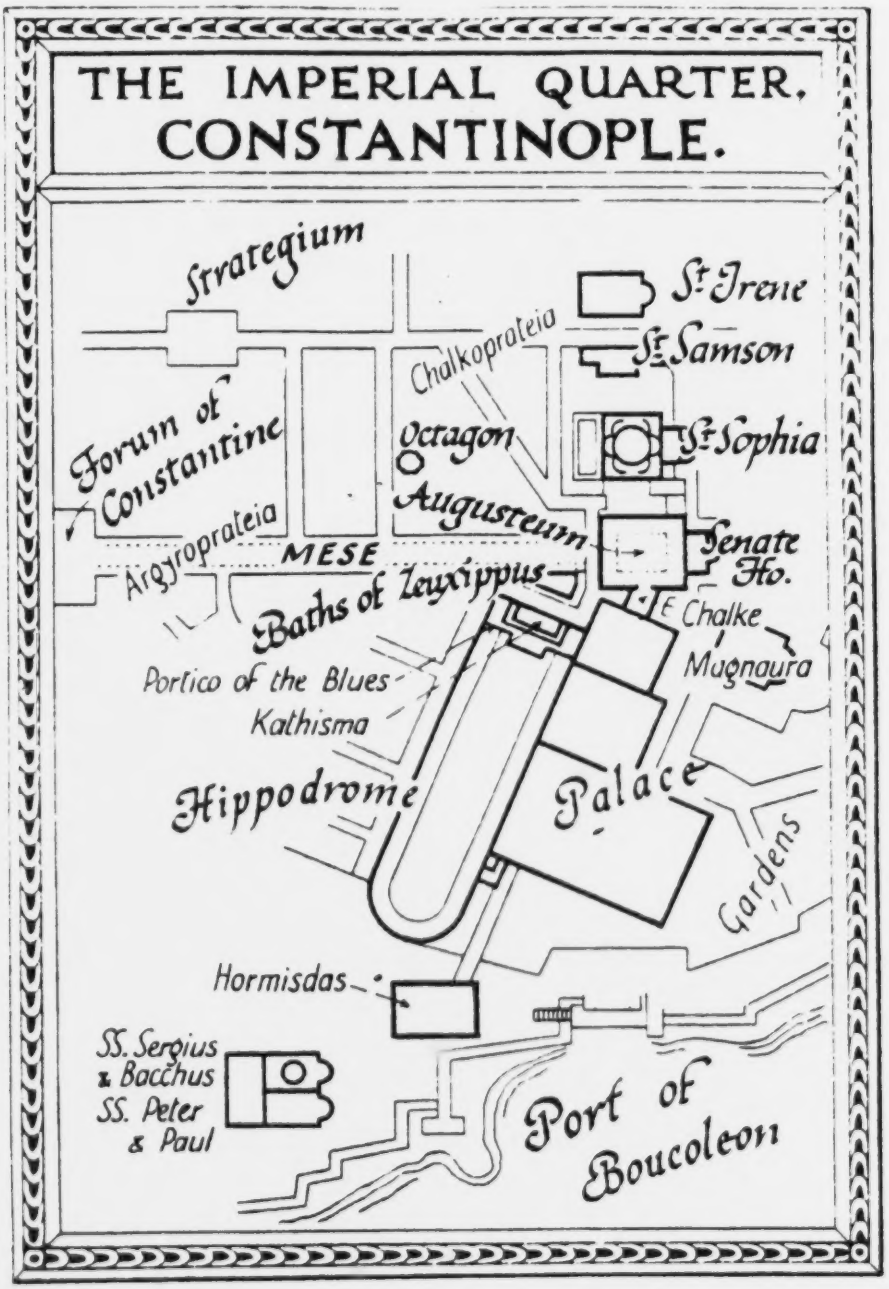
NIKA REVOLT

The most important place where people of the city congregated was the Hippodrome, an arena capable of seating 100,000 spectators at the chariot races. It was built to imitate the Circus Maximus in Rome. The Hippodrome flanked the palace and represented continuity with the classical past.

Civil disturbances were often the work of the two great factions of the Hippodrome, the Greens and the less numerous Blues. Because Justinian himself had been a supporter of the Blues in his younger days, they had powerful backers.

The games held at the Hippodrome on the Ides of January 532 were the occasion for the beginning of the most severe rioting the city ever experienced. Justinian wanted to strengthen Constantinople. It did not occur to him that in making his plans his people would oppose such expense and activity. The African policy of Justinian, although the natural continuation of the policy which he had adopted from the beginning, met with far more opposition. An invasion of Africa alarmed a large section of public opinion. Severe internal disturbances accompanied this external danger. A bitter struggle arose between the autocratic central government and the political organizations of the people. In 532 the Nika revolt broke out in Constantinople and nearly deprived Justinian of his throne.

The emperor had favored the Blues, who supported his political and ecclesiastical policies. Upon coming to the throne, he tried to distance himself from the demes, or common people and took measures against their factions. The demes represented not only political and religious tendencies but also different class interests. The Blues represented the upper class, while the Greens represented the lower class. These measures instituted by the emperor, along with the heavy burden imposed by his expensive policies, turned both Blues and Greens against him. The two demes consequently united and made common cause against the government. Having failed to obtain the release of some prisoners, the Blues and Greens joined forces. Adopting as their slogan the word "nika" (victory) they made their way from the Hippodrome to the city prefect, where they seized the prisoners and set fire to buildings. The capital was in flames. Fires engulfed the Hagia Sophia, the Senate House, the Chalke Gate of the palace, and the bath house. Justinian prepared to flee but his wife, the Empress Theodora, stopped him. The situation was further saved by Belisarius, who ascended with his troops to the Hippodrome and killed thousands of people (Procopius claimed it was 30,000), thus ending the revolt. Justinian had carried out his policy and overcome the resistance to it. He had established his own prestige so that it never again was challenged. Thus the Nika revolt marked a major turning point in the reign of Justinian. However, the financial burdens of his military undertakings and his extensive building activity further imposed financial exhaustion on the empire.



G.P. Baker. Justinian, New York: Dodd, Meade & Co., 1932

PRIMARY SOURCE

ROLEPLAY: NIKA REVOLT

Justinian wanted to prepare an expeditionary force to recapture for the empire the lost western province of Africa, which had been a Vandal Kingdom for three generations. Whatever happened the cost would be tremendous. Most of the people wanted no war at all. Some went so far as to say that if the emperor did not change his mind he should be cast out. The Green party presented its grievances. Many came in from the villages to protest the tax levied on shopkeepers, farmers, and all those who owned a boat. They appealed to the Emperor to hold to their old rights of free speech and public assembly.

The assembly began at the opening of the games in the Hippodrome. It was Sunday. In the interval between the two races, the Demarch (Leader) of the Greens stood up and called to Justinian in the imperial box. The chronicle of Theophanes contains a remarkable record of a conversation in the Hippodrome between the Emperor and the Green party. It is apparently an official record preserved in the archives of the Greens.

Some action on the part of the Chamberlain Calapodius had angered the Greens. They begin by complaining of this in respectful tones then go on to air their complaints as an oppressed party. A mandator, or herald speaks for the Emperor.

Greens *Long may you live, Justinian Augustus! I am oppressed, o best of soverains, and my grievances, God knows, have become intolerable. I fear to name the oppressor, lest he prosper the more and I endanger my own safety.*

Mandator *Who is he? I know him not.*

Greens *My oppressor, O Thrice August, is to be found in the quarter of the shoemakers.*

Mandator *No one does you wrong.*

Greens *One man and one only does me wrong. Mother of God, may he be humbled.*

Mandator *Who is he? We know him not.*

Greens *Nay you know him well, O Thrice August! I am oppressed this day.*

Mandator *We know not that anyone oppresses you.*

Greens *It is Calopodius, the spathar who wrongs me, O Lord of It All!*

PRIMARY SOURCE

Mandator *Calopodius has no concern with you!*

Greens *My oppressor will perish like Judas; God will requite him quickly.*

Mandator *You come, not to see the games, but to insult your rulers.*

Greens *If anyone wrongs me, he will perish like Judas.*

Mandator *Silence, Jews, Manichaeans, and Samaritans!*

Greens *Do you disparage us with the name of Jews and Samaritans? The Mother of God is with all of us.*

Mandator *When will ye cease cursing yourselves?*

Greens *If anyone denies that our lord the Emperor is Orthodox, let him be anathema, as Judas.*

Mandator *I would have you all baptized in the name of one God.*

Greens *(tumultuously) I am baptized in One God.*

Mandator *Verily, if you refuse to be silent, I shall have you beheaded.*

Greens *Every person seeks a post of authority, to secure his personal safety. Your majesty must not be indignant at what I say in my tribulation, for the Deity listens to all complaints. We have good reason, O Emperor! to mention all things now. For we do not even know where the palace is, nor where is the government. If I come into the city once, it is sitting on a mule, and I wish I had not to come then, your Majesty.*

Mandator *Every one is free to move in public, where he wishes, without danger.*

Greens *I am told I am free, yet I am not allowed to use my freedom. If a man is free but is suspected as a Green, he is sure to be publicly punished.*

Mandator *Have ye no care for your lives that ye thus brave death?*

Greens *Let this (green) color be once uplifted then justice disappears. Put an end to the scenes of murder and let us be lawfully punished. Behold, An Abundant Foun tain, punish as many as you like. Verily, human nature cannot tolerate these*

two (contradictory) things. Would that Sabbatis had never been born, to have a son who is a murderer. It is the twenty-sixth murder that has been committed in the Zeugma; the victim was a spectator in the morning, in the afternoon, O Lord of All, he was butchered.

Blues *Yourselves are the only party in the Hippodrome that has murderers among their number.*

Greens *When ye commit murder ye leave the city in flight.*

Blues *Ye shed blood, and debate. Ye are the only party here with murderers among them.*

Greens *O Lord Justinian! They challenge us and yet no one slays them. Truth will compel assent. Who slew the woodseller in the Zeugma, O Emperor?*

Mandator *Ye slew him.*

Greens *Who slew the son of Epagathus, Emperor?*

Mandator *Ye slew him too, and ye slander the Blues.*

Greens *Now have pity, O lord God! The truth is suppressed. I should like to argue with them who say that affairs are managed by God. Whence comes this misery?*

Mandator *God cannot be tempted with evil.*

Greens *God you say, cannot be tempted with evil? Who is it then who wrongs me? Let some philosopher or hermit explain the distinction.*

Mandator *Accursed blasphemers, when will ye hold your peace?*

Greens *If it is the pleasure of your Majesty, I hold my peace, albeit unwillingly. I know all, but I say nothing. Good-bye Justice! You are no longer in fashion. I shall turn and become a Jew. Better to be a "Greek" (pagan) than a Blue, God knows.*

Blues *You are detestable, I cannot abide the sight of you. Your enmity dismays me.*

Greens *Let the bones of the spectators be exhumed (let them be murdered)!*

Adapted from Theophanes, A.M. 6187 (Justinian II). Quoted in J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2. (London: MacMillian, 1923).

LESSON THREE

THE VANDAL WAR IN AFRICA

A. OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the significance of the Vandal War in Africa.

2. To compare two different viewpoints on the war.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Have students locate the Byzantine empire in Africa and draw conclusions about the extent of the empire.

2. Have students read the historian Procopius' account of the Vandal wars.

3. Discussion questions.

   a. Why was it important to restore Africa to the empire?

   b. What are some of the problems that the conquest caused the Byzantines? The Vandals? The native North Africans?

4. Compare the speeches of Belisarius (Roman) and Gelimer (Vandal). What techniques did they use to inspire their men?

5. Divide the class into small groups that represent different viewpoints on the wars. Include citizen groups, Vandals, and the emperor's men,

   a. Have a spokesperson for each group present its side to the emperor.

   b. Have students comment upon their reaction to the emperor's response.

C. EVALUATING THE LESSON

1. The position papers written by each group may be evaluated.

2. Have the students write their own epic poem using a topic such as the war in Bosnia.

VANDAL WAR IN AFRICA

It was a sacred mission of the emperor to free Roman lands from Barbarian invaders and Arian heretics and to restore the ancient frontiers of a single Roman and orthodox Christian empire. It was toward this end that the whole of Justinian's policy was directed. The reestablishment of Roman rule in Africa constituted a major part of Justinian's plan for the revival of the western empire. The campaigns his generals conducted to regain Africa are recounted by Procopius in his *De Bello Vandalico*. Procopius' account is complemented by the account of the African poet, Flavius Cresconius Corippus, whose epic the *Iohannis* or *De Bello Libyco* has as its subject the campaign that John Trogolyta, Justinian's *magister militate* in Africa, conducted against the Berber-speaking North Africans. This account, though somewhat suspect because of the author's hope of patronage from the hero of the poem, provides additional data.

The main forces were directed to the west, where triumphant success crowned the military activities of the Byzantine army. The Vandals, the Ostrogoths, and to some extent the Visigoths were forced into subjection to the emperor. The Mediterranean Sea was almost converted into a Byzantine lake. However, the success was attained at a price too dear, for it involved the empire's complete economic exhaustion.

Conditions in northern Africa under the Vandals were particularly difficult because those barbarians initiated severe persecutions against the native Christian population, put many citizens and representatives of the clergy in jail, and confiscated their property. Refugees from Africa arrived at Constantinople and implored the Emperor to inaugurate a campaign against the Vandals, assuring him that a general revolt of the native Berber-speaking population would follow.

The expedition against the Vandals involved the transfer of a vast army by sea to northern Africa. Procopius gives an account of the council at which the question of the African expedition was discussed for the first time. The magistrates expressed doubts about the success of the undertaking. Justinian was beginning to waiver. However, the expedition was finally decided upon. He placed the gifted general Belisarius, who had quelled the dangerous Nika revolt, at the head of the vast army.

The Vandal War lasted, including some peaceful intervals, from 533 to 548. Justinian dispatched Belisarius to Africa with an army and instructed him to reestablish Roman rule. The aged Vandal king Hilderic has been defeated in battle by a force of Berber rebels under the African chieftain Antalas and subsequently deposed by Gelimer, a Vandal usurper. The pretext of Justinian's expedition was to restore Hilderic to his rightful throne. The true aim was the conquest of Africa. In 533 Belisarius gained a decisive victory over the Vandals at

Tricamarum. After this victory Gelimer fled. Belisarius later returned to Byzantium . Vandal power was ended and northern Africa was once more united with the Roman empire.

When Justinian heard of his army's capture of Carthage, he issued a decree introducing his Institutes. In that decree he says, "Our warlike labors, barbarian nations who have passed beneath our yoke know, and Africa as well as countless other provinces, which thanks to the victories vouchsafed us by heaven have after so long a space of time been restored once again to Roman dominion and added to our empire, bear witness to them." And in the preamble to the decree he added to his name the titles Alanicus, Vandalicus, Africanus.

Some time later, Cusina, another native Chieftain, began a rebellion. This time Antalas, the earlier rebel, allied himself with Solomon, Belisarius' successor. Together they defeated the rebels under Cusina, In 536 the Romans faced another threat to their rule, this time a rebellion of Roman soldiers. As a result Justinian sent Belisarius to Africa a second time. Belisarius routed the rebels.

After several years of peace, another rebellion broke out in 543. This rebellion is the subject of a poem by Corrippus. Belisarius had several brilliant victories against the Vandals. The result of all these offensive wars was to double the extent of Justinian's empire. The Mediterranean again became practically a Roman lake. But the emperor did not succeed in reconquering the entire western Roman empire. The power of the emperor was not equally firm throughout the vast newly conquered territories. These lands could be retained only by force, and for this the empire had neither power nor means. That is why the brilliant outward success of Justinian's offensive wars led to serious later complications, both political and economic. The restoration of Roman power in Africa was a triumph for Justinian, but the plan of restoring a united Roman empire died with him. Meanwhile, his general external policy brought about an extremely severe internal economic crisis to the empire.

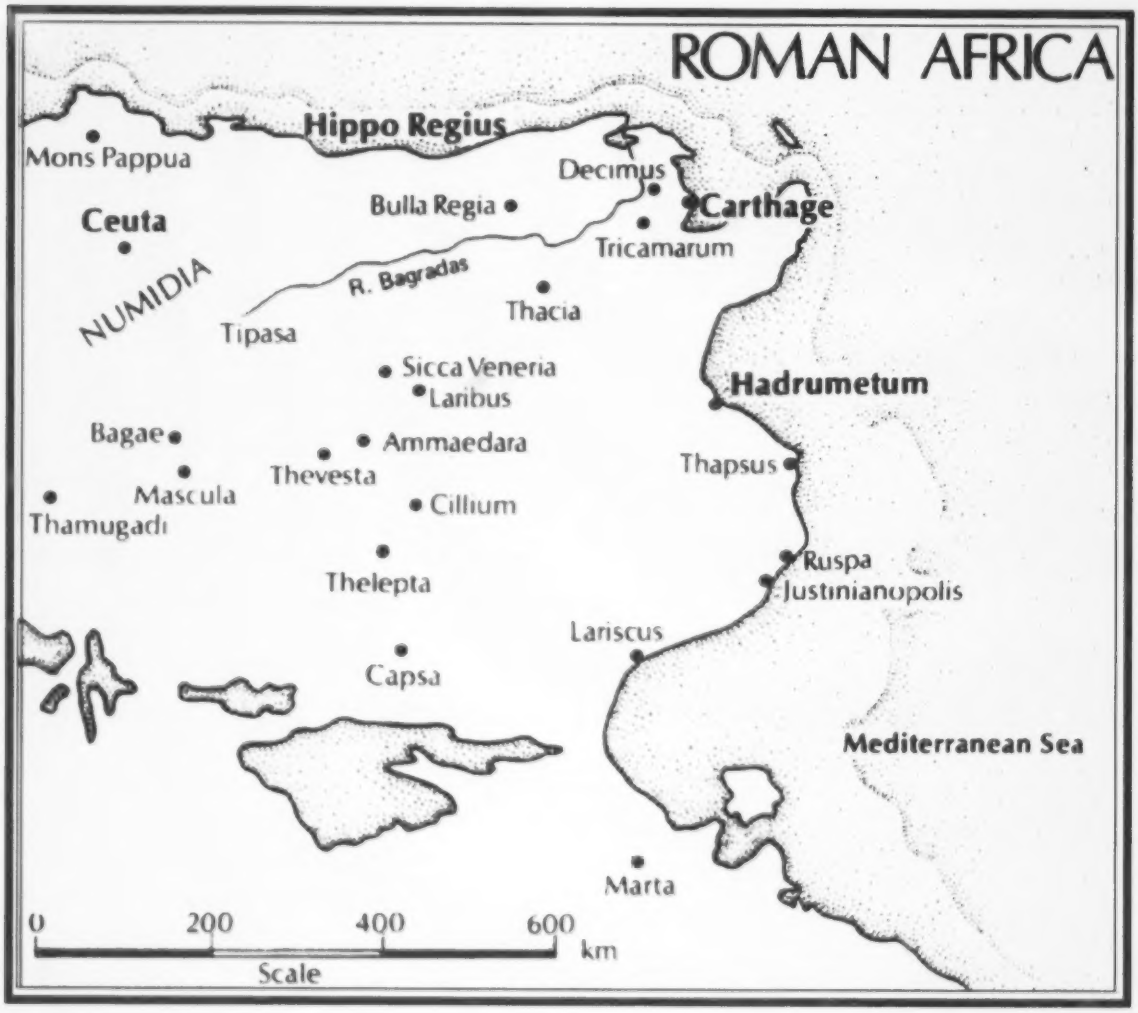
HISTORY OF THE WARS
BOOK IV, THE VANDALIC WAR
BY PROCOPIUS

Procopius became a legal adviser to Belisarius while the general was serving on the Persian front. Later he accompanied him on expeditions to Africa and Italy and began writing a history of Justinian's wars in which he was able to give an eye witness account.

Belisarius gave pledges that if the Vandals should be conquered they would be sent without the least delay to their homes with all their booty, and thus bound them by oaths in very truth to assist the Romans with all zeal in carrying through the war.

And when all the things had been prepared by him in the best way possible, and the circuit wall had been already completed, he called together the whole army and spoke as follows:"As for exhortation, fellow Romans, I do not know that it is necessary to say to you, men you have recently conquered the enemy so completely that Carthage here and the whole of Libya is a possession of your valor and for this reason you will have no need of admonition that prompts to daring. For the spirits of those who are conquered are by no means wont to be overcome. But I think it not untimely to remind you of this one thing, that , if you on the present occasion but prove equal to your own selves in valor, straightway there will be an end for the Vandals of their hopes and for you of the battle. Hence there is every reason why you should enter into this engagement with the greatest eagerness.... For fortune, once seen to be bad, straightway enslaves the spirit of those who have fallen in her way. And I shall explain how the struggle involves for you at the present time a greater stake than formerly. For in the former side the danger was, if things did not go well for us that we should not take the land of others but if we do not win the struggle, we shall lose the land which is our own.

And on the following day Gelimer commanded the Vandals to place the women and children and their possessions in the middle of the stockade, and calling all together he spoke as follows: "It is not for glory or to retrieve the loss of empire alone, that we are about to fight,... but you see that our fortunes have come round to such that if we do not gain the mastery over the enemy, we shall if we perish, leave them as master over our children and our wives and our land and our possession, while if we survive, there will be our own enslavement... If we live the name of the Vandals will survive and their empire be preserved.... For it was not by cowardice that we were defeated, but we tripped over obstacles interposed by fortune and were overcome.



Redrawn from Robert Browning, Justinian and Theodora (New York: Praeger, 1971)

LESSON FOUR

JUSTINIAN AS A LAW REFORMER

A. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the importance of having a written legal code.
2. To draw conclusions from primary source materials.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss with students why we have laws.
2. Have students read excerpts from Justinian's code.
3. Discussion questions:
   a. Explain the meaning of the term slave.
   b. Explain the difference between manifest and non-manifest.
   c. Define injury.

C. EVALUATION

1. Have students write a law that could have been written during the time of Justinian.
2. Have students write an account of a "manifest" crime that might have taken place during the time of Justinian.

JUSTINIAN AS A LAW REFORMER

One of the supreme achievements of Roman civilization was law. However, laws were not systematically published, and imperial archives did not always keep copies of new legislation. Justinian's fame as a legal reformer has survived to the present day. It is not likely to fade, though as a conqueror, administrator, and theologian, he has almost passed out of recollection.

He had been on the throne only six months when the first edict dealing with the question of legal revision appeared. In his opinion an emperor must be not only glorified with arms, but also with laws. He desired to be the protector of laws as well as the victor over enemies. Since the days of the Roman empire, legislative power was in the hands of the emperor, who issued imperial constitutions called laws or statute laws. Juridical publications provided judges with collections of extracts from these imperial constitutions. Unfortunately, there was no central organ for publication of the imperial constitutions. Increasingly in quantity annually, imperial edicts needed to be gathered in a single collection.

The written opinions of members of the Roman bar had gained steadily in number. The imperial ordinances and professional writings also multiplied with astonishing rapidity. A collection of all the imperial precepts given by the emperor from Hadrian to Constantine was made. This was supplemented by the Code of Theodosius II, which included all the imperial constitutions issued by the sovereign from Constantine to himself. Then three new codes of law appeared at the beginning of the sixth century. These were the Edict of Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths (500), Le Romana Burgundorium (500), and the Lex Romana Visigothorum (506). They were all undertaken by barbarian monarchs to apply to subjects partly Roman and partly barbarian. They did not affect the law of the empire.

No attempt had been made at logical arrangement of the imperial statute books, and laws dealing with an infinite variety of subjects were piled one upon the other. Many of them were no longer used. The dissertations of jurists were also troublesome. Generation after generation of independent commentators, who started from different stand points, had treated the same subject matter by different methods and arrived at conflicting results.

Such was the state of the twofold body of the Roman law that was the subject of Justinian's reform. His objectives were to correct the disorder and reduce the bulky dimensions of the body of law. Justinian took on the task of compiling a code of imperial constitutions up to his time and revising the old juridical writings. He gave the task over to Tribonian. He appointed a commission of ten to carry out the design. He commanded them to:

> cut off all superfluous preambles, repetition, contradictions and archaisms, to compile, define and concise laws from the already existing codes and later constitutions, and to arrange them under appropriate titles, adding to, curtailing and even altering their words where advisable, collecting into one enactment the material scattered through a number of constitutions, and making the meaning of the latter more clear, yet in such a manner that the chronological order of these constitutions should be evident not only from the additions of their dates and consulships, but by their actual arrangement, the earlier being placed first, and the later afterwards. (Quoted in George Cuzon, *Justinian*, London: Thomas Shrimpton and Son, 1883.)

Justinian relied on the genius of his minister Tribonian, who was deeply learned in the law. Tribonian has been called the last Roman jurist whose hand preserved and renewed Rome's lawyers and its laws. At the end of 14 months the commission presented the emperor with a single new code containing statutes from Hadrian to his day. It was published in April 529. This code has not been preserved. Five years later, however, Justinian superseded it with a second and amended addition. A second code was necessary because the emperor had issued 50 decrees and 200 ordinances of his own. The new code appeared in November 534, the Codex Repetitae Praelectionis. This Code was designed for practical use in settling disputes. Then Justinian turned to reorganizing the Common Law. This compilation was completed in three years and published under the name of the Digest. It was for the guidance of judges. A third production, called the Institute, was a summary of the principles of civil law as an elementary textbook for beginners. The Code, Digest, and Institutes were written in Latin, little understood by the majority of the population, while most other legal texts were written in Greek.

The publication of the three works took seven years and became the depository of the riches of Roman jurisprudence, thus saving and transforming the Roman law library. The Code, Digest, and Institutes were written in Latin, which little understood by the majority of the population because the principal language of the Byzantine empire was Greek.

Justinian's Code preserved Roman law and supplied an underlying unity to the central state. The outstanding characteristic of Justinian's legislation was its strong emphasis on the powers of the emperor. It had a lasting impact on the development of political thought in the West as well as in Byzantium. Roman law remained the basis of legal development throughout the empire. The Code constituted the final, definitive form of Roman law. It remained until recently the main element in the codes of most European countries.

JUSTINIAN'S CODE
THE INSTITUTES

IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
THE EMPEROR CAESAR FLAVIUS JUSTINIANIAN
CONQUEROR OF THE ALAMANNI GOTHS, FRANKS, GERMANS,
ANTES ALANI VANDALS AFRICANS
DEVOUT FORTUNATE RENOWNED VICTORIOUS AND TRIUMPHANT
FOREVER AUGUSTUS
TO YOUNG ENTHUSIASTS FOR LAW

IMPERIAL MAJESTY should not only be graced with arms but also armed with laws, so that good government may prevail in time of war and peace alike. The head of the Roman state can then stand victorious not only over enemies in war but also over troublemakers, driving out their wickedness through the paths of the law, and can triumph as much for this devotion top the law as for his conquests in battle.

1. Long hours of work and careful planning have, with God's help, given us success in both these fields. Barbarian nations brought beneath our yoke know the scale of our exertions in war. Africa and countless other provinces, restored to Roman jurisdiction and brought back within our empire after so long an interval, bear witness to the victories granted to us by the will of heaven. However, it is by the laws which we have already managed to enact and collect that all our peoples are ruled.

2. The solemn pronouncements of the emperors were in disarray. We collected them into a clear systematic series. Then we turned our attention to the rolls of the classical law, that boundless ocean of learning, and by passing by heaven's favor as it were through the midst of the deep, we soon completed a tasks which seemed overwhelming.

3. When with God's help we reached the end of that, we called together Tribonian, of eminent rank, minister and former chancellor of our sacred palace, and also Theophilus and Dorotheus, professors of illustrious rank. From all three we had already received many proofs of their brilliance, their learning in the law, and their loyalty in carrying out our wishes. We gave them this specific instruction: to compose with our authority and at our instigation an edition of Institutes. Our intention was to give you an elementary framework, a cradle of law, not based on obscure old stories but illuminated by the light of our imperial splendor. And to ensure that you hear and adopt nothing useless or out of place but only the true principles at the heart of the subject. Until now even the best students have barely begun to read imperial pronouncements after four years of study; but you have been found worthy of the great honor and good fortune of doing so from the beginning and of following

a course of legal education which from start to finish proceeds from the Emperor's lips.

4. It was for these reasons that after the completion of the fifty books of the Digest of Pandects, in which all the classical law has been brought together and which we achieved through this same excellent Tribonian and other learned men of illustrious rank we gave the order for the Institutes to be composed in these four books, to form the first principles of all learning in the law.

5. They now give a brief account both of how matters used to stand and of the imperial measures which brought light to areas darkened by disuse.

6. They have been compiled from all the books of Institutes written by the classical lawyers, and especially from the works of our own Gaius, both his Institutes and his Everyday Law, though also from other treaties. When the work was finished, the three learned commissioners presented the books to us. We have read and examined them and have endowed them with the full force of our own pronouncements.

7. Study our law. Do your best and apply yourselves keenly to it. Show that you have mastered it. You can then cherish a noble ambition; when your course in law is finished you will be able to perform whatever duty is entrusted to you in the government of our state.

Given at Constantinople on 21st November 533, the year of the third consulate of our lord Justinian, Perpetual Augustus.

From C. F. Kolbert, trans., Justinian: *The Digest of Roman Law* (New York: Penguin, 1979), pp. 44-45.

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JUSTINIAN'S CODE
THE DIGEST OF ROMAN LAW

The standard unit of the Roman law was the freeborn Roman citizen, male of age and sound mind and head of his family. Gaius says, " The main distinction in the law of person is this, that all men are either free, or slaves, (*Institutes* 1.9) Justinian explains: "Slavery is an institution of the law of nations whereby one man is made the property of another, contrary to natural right." (*Institutes* 1.3.2)

(Quoted in G.F. Kolbert, *Justinian: The Digest of Roman Law*, New York: Penguin Books, 1979, 49. Excerpts below are from Kolbert.)

CONCERNING THEFT
BOOK 46, TITLE 2

1. *Theft is a dishonest handling of a thing in order to gain by it or by its use or possession. Such conduct is against the very law of nature.*

2. *There are two degrees of theft: manifest and non-manifest.*

3. *A manifest thief is one whom the Greeks describe as "caught in the very act," that is, one who is caught with the stolen goods on him. It matters little who it is who actually catches him—whether it is the owner of the stolen goods or anyone else. But it may be asked whether a thief is only a manifest thief if he is caught in the very act of stealing or indeed whether it is good enough that he be apprehended just anywhere. The better view and this was Julian's opinion is that even if he is not caught in the place where he committed the theft, he is nevertheless a manifest thief if he is caught with the stolen thing on him before he has taken it to the place he intended.*

4. *The place he intended to carry it to is understood as the place where he intended to stop that day with the stolen thing.*

5. *Therefore irrespective of whether he is caught in public or in a private place, so long as he has not yet borne the thing to the place he was making for, the charge will be one of manifest theft if he is caught with the stolen thing on hi; and that was the view of Cassius. But if he has got his loot home, even if he is caught with the stolen things in his possession, he is not a manifest thief.*

6. *For although theft may be committed many times over by successive handling of stolen goods, it was thought right to determine whether or not a theft was manifest at the time of the original thieving...*

8. *What sort of theft is non-manifest is clear; for a stealing which is not within the meaning of manifest theft and must be non-manifest theft.*

10. *Anyone whose interest it is that the property should not be stolen can bring an action for theft.*

11. *But he can only bring the action if his interest in the thing is an honest interest.*

CONCERNING ROBBERY WITH VIOLENCE AND RIOTOUS ASSEMBLY
BOOK 47, TITLE 8

1. *(Paul) Anyone who seizes property by force is liable to an action of non-manifest theft for double damages and to an action of robbery with violence for quadruple damages; but if the action for robbery is brought first, the action for theft will be refused. . . . The Paetor speaks also of "damage". This includes every kind of injury, even that which is clandestine.... The action for robbery with violence will not be granted against a child below the age of puberty who is not capable of forming a criminal intent unless it is alleged that it his slave, or a group of slaves, who committed the offence, in which case he could be liable to a noxal action for the surrender of that slave or group of slaves for the robbery.*

CONCERNING INSULTING BEHAVIOR AND SCANDALOUS LIBEL
BOOK 47 TITLE 10

1. *(Ulpian) Anything which is done unlawfully is called "injury," for everything which is done otherwise than according to law is deemed to be injurious; . . . Take the case for example of an insult to my wife who is still a daughter to her own family; a right of action lies not only for me and for her father but also for my wife herself.*

2. *(Paul). If an insult is inflicted upon a husband, his wife cannot bring an action because it is right and proper that wives should be defended by their husbands, but not husbands by their wives.*

LESSON FIVE

BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE

A. OBJECTIVES

1. To appreciate the innovative contributions of the Byzantines in architecture.

2. To realize the lasting influence of the dome on construction of great religious buildings.

3. Use primary sources to collect information.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Have students read selection from *Buildings* by Procopius.

   a. Why was St. Sophia (Hagia Sophia) rebuilt?

   b. What was the importance of this building?

   c. How did the builders solve architectural problems?

   d. How did the people react to the church?

   e. What purpose has the building served since the mid-fifteenth century?

2. Have students draw their own illustrations of the new style of architecture. Have students analyze the plan of the cathedral.

3. Have students look at the diagram of the dome. Compare the dome with the one on the Cathedral of Florence. (See *Crowning the Cathedral of Florence: Brunelleschi Builds His Dome*, Unit of Study, National Center for History in the Schools). Also compare St. Sophia with the Mosque of Selim in the Turkish city of Edirne (formerly Adrianople).

4. Using the sketch of St. Sophia on the cover of this unit, have students describe what they see.

5. Discuss the chief engineering problems. How did the dome influence the architec tural style?

C. EVALUATION

1. Evaluate the student's descriptive paragraphs.

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Justinian gave Anthemius the commission to build the St. Sophia?

2. How is St. Sophia constructed differently from earlier churches?

3. How does Procopius describe the physical appearance of the church?

ARCHITECTURE IN THE AGE OF JUSTINIAN

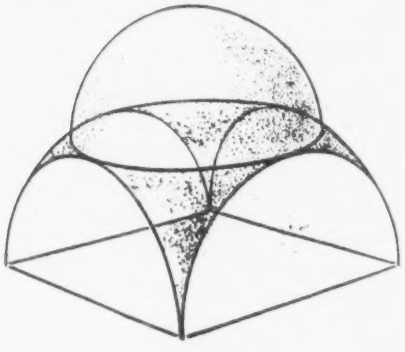
Procopius wrote not only about the destruction of property as the result of wars during the reign of Justinian but also about the erection of beautiful buildings. In his *Buildings*, written between 553-555, Procopius described these structures.

As the last corpses were carried out of the Hippodrome and the last smoldering fires extinguished following the Nika revolt, Justinian and his advisers were busy with plans for the future. The Great Church of the Holy Wisdom of God had been reduced to rubble. Begun by Constantine and completed by his son Constatnius II, it symbolized the place of the empire in the divine scheme of things. The new church would surpass every other building ever erected to the glory of God and proclaim the greatness of Justinian to all nations to the end of time.

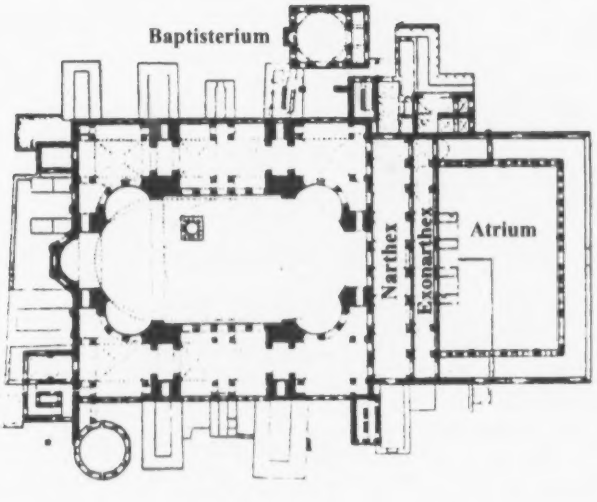
Since the time of Constantine, most churches had followed the pattern of the basilica, that is, a large hall for the transaction of public business. This church would be rectangular with a vaulted roof and an apse at the east end. The columns in the apse of the basilica carried galleries or other structures above it, but in the same straight or curved lines as those beneath. The lines of the dome were carried up on the distinct lines of the lower walls. The capitals of the columns in the works of the ancient Greeks or Romans were carved in the same design in every building. The main rectangular area could be flanked by two or four aisles whose pitched roof was supported by a row of columns and arches. However these churches appealed to the world, not to the spirit.

The Byzantine changed all that. Justinian wanted a church that would give those who entered it the illusion of being on the threshold of another world. This required a radically new treatment of spatial relationships. The first and greatest example of this new design is St. Sophia at Constantinople, which is perhaps the boldest instance of a sudden change known in the history of architecture.

The great dome of St. Sophia forms the crown of a building quite original in plan. The dome is placed on four arches high above the roof around it. These arches spring from detached piers, the keystone above each arch directly supporting the dome. The capitals of the columns are carved in different manners. It is to the Byzantine architects under the fostering care of Justinian that we owe the picturesque changes and details of the style that takes its name from his capital and is to a large extent identified with him.



Byzantine dome



Plan, Hagia Sophia

PRIMARY SOURCE

BUILDINGS OF JUSTINIAN BY PROCOPIUS

BOOK I

I. The lowest dregs of the people in Byzantium once assailed the Emperor Justinian in the revellion called Nika, which I have clearly described in my "History of the Wars." To prove that it was not merely against the Emperor, but no less against God that they took up arms, they ventured to burn the church of the Christians. (This church the people of Byzantium call Sophia; a name most worthy of God). God permitted them to effect this crime, knowing how great the beauty of this church would be when restored. Thus the church was entirely reduced to ashes; but the Emperor Justinian not long afterwards adorned it in such a fashion, that if anyone had asked the Christians in former times if they wished their church to be destroyed and thus restored, showing them the appearance of the church which we now see, I think it probable that they would have prayed that they might as soon as possible behold their church destroyed, in order that it might be turned into its present form. The Emperor, regardless of expense of all kinds, pressed on its restoration and collected together all the workmen from every land. Arthemius of Tralles, by far the most celebrated architect, not only of his own but of all former times, carried out the King's zealous intentions, organized the labors of the workmen, and prepared the models of the future construction. Associated with him was another architect named Isidorus, a Milesian by birth, a man of intelligence and worthy to carry out the plans of Emperor Justinian. It is indeed a proof of the esteem with which God regarded the Emperor, that He furnished him with men who would be so useful in effecting his designs, and we are compelled to admire the intelligence of the Emperor, in being able to choose the most suitable of mankind to carry out the noblest of his works.

The church consequently presented a glorious spectacle, extraordinary to those who behold it, and altogether incredible to those who are told of it. In height it rises to the very heavens, and overtops the neighboring buildings like a ship anchored among them: it rises above the rest of the city, which it adorns, while it forms a part of it, and it is one of its beauties that being a part of the city and growing out of it, it stands so high above it, that from it the whole city can be beheld as from a watch-tower. Its length and breadth are so judiciously arranged that it appears to be both long and wide without being disproportionate. It is distinguished by indescribable beauty, for it excels both in its size and in the harmony of its proportion, having no part excessive and none deficient; being more magnificent than ordinary buildings and much more elegant than those which are out of proportion. It is singularly full of light and sunshine; you would declare that the place is not lighted by the sun from without, but that the rays are produced within itself, such an abundance of light is poured into this church.... A spherical-shaped dome standing upon this circle makes it exceedingly beautiful; from the lightness of the building does not appear to rest upon a solid foundation, but to cover the place beneath as though it were suspended from heaven by the fabled golden chain. All these parts surprisingly joined to one another in the air, suspended one from another and resting only on that which is next to them, form the work into one admirably harmonious whole, which spectators do not care to dwell upon for long in the mass, as each individual part attracts the eye and turns it to itself. The sight causes men to constantly change their point of view, and the spectator can nowhere point to any part which he admires more than the rest, but having viewed the art which appears everywhere, men contract their eyebrows as they look at each point, and are unable

PRIMARY SOURCE

to comprehend such workmanship, but always depart thence stupefied through their incapacity to comprehend it. So much for this....

Let us now proceed to describe the remaining parts of the church. The entire ceiling is covered with pure gold which adds glory to its beauty, though the rays of light reflected upon the gold from the marble surpass it in beauty, though the rays of gold which adds glory to its beauty, though the rays of light reflected upon the gold from the marble surpass it in beauty; there are two porticos on each side, which do not in any way dwarf the size of the church, but add to its width. In length they reach quite to the ends, but in height they fall short of it; these also have a domed ceiling and are adorned with gold. Of these two porticos the one is set apart for male, and the other for female worshippers; there is no variety in them, nor do they differ in any respect from one anther, but their very equality and similarity add to the beauty of the church. Who could describe the galleries of the portion set apart for women, or the numerous porticos and cloistered courts with which the church is surrounded? Who could tell the beauty of the columns and marbles with which the church is adorned; one would think that one had come upon a meadow full of flowers in bloom; who would not admire the purple tints of some and greens of others, the glowing red and glittering white, and those too, which nature, like a painter, has marked with the strongest contrasts of color? Whoever enters there to worship perceives at once that it is not by any human strength or skill, but by the favor of God that this work has been perfected; his mind rises sublime to commune with God, feeling that He cannot be far off, but must especially love to dwell in the place which He has chosen; and this takes place not only when a man sees it for the first time, but it always makes the same impression upon him, as though he had never beheld it before. No one ever became weary of this spectacle, but those who are in the Church delight in what they see, and when they leave it, magnify it in their talk about it; moreover, it is impossible accurately to describe the treasure of gold and silver plate and gems which the Emperor Justinian has presented to it; but by the description of one of them I leave the rest to be inferred. That part of the church which is especially sacred, and where the priests alone are allowed to enter, which is called the Sanctuary, contains forty thousand pounds weight of silver.

The above is an account, written in the most abridged and cursory manner, describing in the fewest possible words the most admirable structure of the church at Constantinople which is called the Great Church, build by the Emperor Justinian, who did not merely supply the finds for it, but assisted it by the labor and powers of his mind.

(From Procopius, *Buildings*, trans by Aubrey Stewart (London: Pilgrims Text Society, 1896).

JUSTINIAN AND THEODORA

A. OBJECTIVES

1. To understand that primary source material can be biased.

2. To speculate on why Procopius wrote such an unfavorable account of Justinian.

3. To draw comparisons to modern day reporting about leaders.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Have students read excerpt from Procopius' *Secret History* in order to identify bias.

2. Have students speculate on why this account may have been written.

3. Have students write a personality profile of Justinian and Theodora from the account. Are the characteristics described those that people would expect from their leaders?

4. Have students write a newspaper about events during the time of Justinian. The stories should include the Nika Revolt, the Vandal Wars, and the building of St. Sophia. The paper should include news accounts, editorials, political cartoons, and travel sections.

EVALUATION

1. Evaluate students' profiles.

2. Have students evaluate each other's newspapers to detect bias.

JUSTINIAN AND THEODORA

The *Secret History*, which is from the pen of Procopius, the historian of Justinian's epoch, paints in exaggerated colors the perverted life of Theodora in the days of her youth. According to Procopius, Theodora, the daughter of the keeper of the bears in the circus, lived in the morally corrupt atmosphere of the stage of that period and became a woman who gave freely of her love to many men. All the dark details about the early years of the future empress must be viewed with skepticism, for they all come from Procopius, whose chief aim in The *Secret History* was to defame Justinian and Theodora. After the stormy period of her early life, she disappeared from the capital, remaining in Africa for a few years. When she returned to Constantinople, she was no longer the flighty actress. She devoted her time to spinning wool and developing a great interest in religion. When Justinian saw her for the first time, her beauty impressed him greatly. He took her to court, bestowed upon her the rank of patrician, and soon married her. Thus, she became the empress of Byzantium.

She remained a faithful wife and showed much interest in government affairs. In the revolt of 532 she played one of the most significant parts. By her cool-headed actions and unusual energy, she saved the empire from destruction. In her religious preferences she openly favored the Monophysites and thus had beliefs directly opposed to those of her husband. Theodora perished of cancer in the year 548, long before Justinian died.

PROCOPIUS
SECRET HISTORY

In the notorious *Secret History* written in 550, Procopius paints a hostile picture of Justinian and his wife Theodora.

Chapter 2
Justinian and Theodora

What sort of people were Justinian and Theodora? and how did it come about that they destroyed the greatness of Rome? These are the questions that I must answer next. . . .

Justinian betrayed his subjects not only because he absolutely refused to uphold the victims of wrong, but because he was perfectly prepared to set himself up as the recognized champion of the partisans; for he lavished great sums of money on these young men and kept them in his entourage, actually promoting some to magistrates and other official positions.

Such was the state of affairs in Byzantium and everywhere else. For like any other disease the infection that began in the capital rapidly spread all over the Roman Empire. The Emperor took no notice at all of what was going on, since he was a man incapable of perception, although he was invariably an eyewitness of all that happened in the hippodromes. For he was extremely simple, with no more sense than a donkey, ready to follow anyone who pulls the rein, waving its ears all the time.

While Justinian behaved in this way he was making a mess of everything else. He had no sooner seized upon his uncle's authority than he began to squander public money in the most reckless manner and with the greatest satisfaction, now that he had got it in his hands. From time to time he came in contact with some of the Huns, and showered money on them for "services to the state". The inevitable result was that Roman territory was exposed to constant incursions. For after tasting the wealth of the Romans these barbarians could never again keep away from the road to the capital. Again, he did not hesitate to throw vast sums into erecting buildings along the sea-front in the hope of checking the constant surge of the waves. . . .

He gathered into his own hands the private property of all the Romans in every land, either accusing them of some crime they had never committed, or coaxing them into the belief that they had made him a free gift. Many who had been convicted of murders and other capital crimes made over to him their entire property, and so escaped without paying the penalty of their offenses. . . .

PRIMARY SOURCE

At this point, I think that it would be well to describe Justinian's personal appearance. In build he was neither tall nor usually short, but of normal height; not at all skinny but rather plump, with a round face that was not unattractive: it retained its healthy color even after a two-day fast. . . .

Such then was his outward appearance; his character was beyond my powers of accurate descriptions. For he was both prone to evil-doing and easily led astray-both knave and fool, to use a common phrase; he never spoke the truth himself to those he happened to be with, but in everything that he said or did there was always a dishonest purpose; yet to anyone who wanted to deceive him he was easy meat. He was by nature an extraordinary mixture of folly and wickedness inseparably blended. . . .

Well then, this emperor was dissembling, crafty, hypocritical, secretive by temperament, two-faced; a clever fellow with a marvelous ability to conceal his real opinion, and able to shed tears, not from joy or sorrow but employing then artfully when required in accordance with the immediate need, lying all the time, not carelessly, however, but confirming his undertakings both with his signature and his own subjects. . . .

As for Theodora, she had an attractive face and a good figure, but was short and pallid, though not in an extreme degree, for there was just a trace of color. Her glance was invariably fierce and intensely hard. . . .

Now we must sketch the outlines of what she and her husband did in unison, for neither did anything apart from the other to the end of their joint lives. For a long time it was universally believed that they were exact opposite in their ideas and interests; but later it was recognized that his false impression had been deliberately fostered to make sure that their subjects did not put their own differences aside and rebel against them but were all divided in their feelings about them. They began by creating a division between the Christians; and by pretending to take opposite sides in religious disputes they split the whole body in two. Then they kept the factions at loggerheads. The Empress made out that she was throwing her full weight behind the Blues, and by extending to them full authority to assail the opposite faction she made it possible for them to disregard all restrictions and perform outrageous deeds of criminal violence.

Finally, many were included in this emperor's list of intimate friends and raised to positions which enabled them to violate the laws and commit offence against the state to their heart's content; but as soon as it was evident that they had made their pile, they promptly came into collision with Theodora and found themselves in her bad books. At first Justinian was perfectly prepared to declare himself their enthusiastic supporter, but later on his sympathy for the poor fellows would dry up and

his zeal on their behalf would become very uncertain. That would be a signal for his partner to damage them beyond recovery while he, shutting his eyes tight to what was going on, opened his arms to receive their entire possessions, thus shamelessly acquired. In practicing these tricks they invariably collaborated, though in the public mind they acted as if they were at daggers drawn; thus they succeeded in dividing their subjects, and in so strengthening their hold that it could never be shaken off.

From Procopius, *Secret History*, trans. by G.A. Williamson (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

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